Hi everyone, it’s me, Tim. Today I want to talk about how Fallout got its name, but before I do that, I need to tell you it’s very, very hard to come up with a name for a game, especially a new game with new mechanics and a new setting, new characters. You would think, there’s a whole team of creative people who've been working on it for a while! They can just go, boom, this is the name. Doesn’t work that way. It’s hard to come up with a word or two that captures the essence of your game and also as a word that hasn’t been used before or phrase that hasn’t been used before that doesn’t have any connotations to it, that doesn't become an acronym, that you’re gonna regret.

Like, when people were talking about making Fallout Online, I was like, “That's like FOOL” and people talk about that online, they’re gonna be talking like, “Who’s playing FOOL?” Also, a lot of words… By the late 90s, there was already this vibe that certain words were being way overused in game names. Words like Dark and Shadow and Blood! These were just starting to show up so much that we would almost kind of make fun and say “Oh, let’s call ours Dark World or Dim Place, Souls of Blood.” It’s just, they’re overused and we were kind of over it.

So, and by the way, just so you know, for Arcanum, I was the one who came up with that subtitle Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura, which I thought at the time was super cool. It made fun of a lot, so I’ve learned my lesson on naming games. So anyway, in Fallout, I went through my notes and I found out, not only a list of names we went through, but kind of the process we went through.

When I first started making the game and I was by myself and I was making lot of a different engines, it was called Testbed because I would make a Voxel engine and I would make a 3D engine and I’d make a sprite engine and Testbed 1, Testbed 2, Testbed 3. I was very unimaginative, I was a programmer, I was doing programmer-y things. Later when we got the GURPS license, it was called GURPS. So you make a build, it’d be called GURPS.exe and we were team GURPS.

Later when we started making the setting, we called it Vault13. So there was a VAULT13.exe after the first Fallout when you started it. Sometime around mid-96, I remember talking with someone, I don’t remember who it was, and I said you know, if we ever make a sequel, we cannot call this game Vault 13 because what would the sequel be? Vault 13 2? Vault 14? More Vault 13? Beyond Vault 13? It was a bad name. So that’s when I said we really need to come up with something better, and I found my notes, I’m looking over here because I’m reading them. By the way, I put together all my notes on Fallout from all these disparate sources, old emails, paper notes, into one word doc and it’s already 86 pages long.

Anyway, I found my naming the game note, and this from June 19th, 1996. Let me read what I wrote before I start going down the list of what we named. I wrote, “This has been an exceptionally difficult time to find a name for this game that is both

catchy and tells somewhat about the premise of the game, is not easy. The cool words describing a nuclear war, such as apocalypse, holocaust, armageddon, aftermath, wasteland, have either already been taken or have religious connotations we don't like" So, here's a small list, in no particular order, that we came up with. We basically had a meeting. I asked people to come from the team, to the conference room and just throw out ideas and I will say… I said, "No idea will be critiqued," although I may critique them now. I just wanted people to throw them out, so here they are. Alternate names for Fallout as of 96

The Vault,
Ground-Zero (that dash is important),
Survivors,
Warriors of the Apocalypse,
Radstorm (I think that one was mine),
Nuclear Winter,
Doomsday Warrior,
After the Bomb,
Hiroshima Revisited,
Vault 13 (Yes, somebody's suggestion of renaming Vault13, was Vault 13),
Remains of the Day,
Devastated Earth,
Fallout,
Nuclear Summer, (Nuclear Winter came earlier than Nuclear Summer),
Dying Earth (And yes, I know about Jack Vance and I didn't say anything, but I knew we weren't gonna get that one),
Out of the Vault,
Ground Zero (with no dash. Yes, we talked about that, "Well, I don't think the dash is such a good idea, what if we just did Ground Zero," and so the person wanted it written up there without the dash. By the way, I think that person was me),
The Rust Age (I Think that was Leonard. Leonard liked the word Rust),
Future Past,
Dead Glow,
After Effects (both spelled E-F-F-E-C-T-S and F-X),
Devolution,
Earth A.D. (Which of course, would apply to any game set after year zero),
There's so many, I have to scroll down.
The Surface,
The Surfacing,
Moribund World (that one was for sure, Jason Anderson),
Vault 666,
World Gone Mad,
Static Age,
The Chosen Ones,

The New World, (there are so many things wrong with that one, I’m not even gonna…),
The World Outside,
Outside the Vault,
After the Collapse,
Return to the World,
and then, Outside.

So, that’s the result of about an hour and a half ninety-minute brian storming session with the team. Oh, as we’re finishing up, somebody threw out Wasteland 2. *laugh* Okay, so I had mentioned in, we had like producer meetings. I mentioned in the producer meeting that we were gonna be doing this, so I got an email from Marketing. The Marketing department had their own meeting. Here were their suggestions:

Firestorm,
Ravaged,
Eradicated,
Annihilation,
Desiccated,
Consumed,
Biohazard,
Mutilation,
Scarred Earth,
and Further into the Wasteland.

Okay, so I took this list, and I was thinking about it. I was also applying that, well if we do a sequel, can we have a Further into the Wasteland 2 or even more Further into the Wasteland”. Every now and then, I’d have meetings with Brian Fargo and I suggested to him what I thought were the best ones on this list. I don’t remember what those were, I didn’t write down what they were… and I don’t think I mentioned Fallout.

I don’t… My programmer brain back then was like, “Fallout? There is no Fallout, it’s eighty years later, that kind of ionizing radiation has decayed.” Brian came back the next day and said, “Why don’t you just name it Fallout? It’s a great name, word, probably won’t even be shortened”. I think he underestimated people on the internet who would take Fallout and shorten it to FO to save a few letters. And I kind of didn't like it and I said, let me think about it.

And sure enough, the next morning I woke up and went, “Fallout is actually a really good name.” I suggested it to the team. Boom, Everybody loved it! It was like, the number one choice, it really worked well for sequels; Fallout 2, Fallout 3, Fallout 4. I specifically did not want to call the first one, Fallout 1. I mean, it was a little bit

hubris to say, okay, I'm gonna call this Fallout 1 and there will be a sequel, so we just called it Fallout. I know a lot of people these days call it Fallout 1 just to distinguish it. I just call it Fallout. To me, its just Fallout

Now, the funny thing is… I think it took weeks before I'd actually changed the build to produce a FALLOUT.EXE. I think it was still producing, either GURPS or TESTBED or something. Keep in mind, we were also making a Mac, DOS and Windows version. So it became, Fallout was DOS, FALLOUTW was Windows and FALLOUTM was Mac. So anyway, that was probably, in hindsight, the easiest naming process ever. Every subsequent new IP I made had the most drawn out naming. Meeting after meeting, copyright searches, people pointing out that it was too close to something else or that it had bad connotations, or that there was a book or an old movie that was already named that.

But what I really like is, and I give it to Fargo, for basically just pointing out. Fallout is a nice short name; captures the essence of the game. You say Fallout and you immediately think, “Oh, this is probably a post apocalyptic game, and it’s probably not a happy post apocalyptic game,” so Fallout fits perfectly. And that’s where the whole series got its name.